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- **Treasurer's football cryptocurrency warning**
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RETURN OF THE FANS

In our winter newsletter, we had a piece entitled 'Football without fans is... different', and so it has remained. Matches have rolled into one and victories have not tasted quite so sweet, with the soulless grounds remaining empty for over a year now, for us at least. Burnley and Newcastle are the only teams to have had completely empty stadiums over the last year. Arguably, these two teams are having disappointing seasons and it is no surprise that both usually enjoy vociferous home crowds that will their players onto victory. Both clubs will eagerly anticipate the return of fans in May, with the government's latest announcements providing long-awaited hope for clubs and fans who have missed out on so much over the past year. Although we have enjoyed our fair share of brilliant moments this season, notably away victories at the Emirates and Anfield, just imagine how much sweeter they would have tasted were away fans in attendance.

The Prime Minister's roadmap towards a post-Covid future includes a return to supporters in stadiums. From 17 May, up to 10,000 supporters will be allowed and originally, this would have found Burnley at a loss. Our final home game of the season was 15 May, against Liverpool, followed by a final game away at Sheffield United. Luckily, the Premier League's chief executive confirmed plans to have fans in grounds for the final two matches of the season, in order to allow all clubs to host their fair share of supporters.

So the penultimate round of games will be moved to 18–20 May. The Liverpool game will be our one and only chance at hosting fans this season. It will be a cathartic experience for those lucky enough to be in attendance and let's hope that the roadmap goes ahead as planned. Many of us have fallen slightly out of love with football this year, but the return of fans to stadiums will give us back the sport we love. Bring it on!'

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Clarets Trust slams ESL plans

The Clarets Trust issued a press statement condemning the ESL plans:

'The Clarets Trust is very strongly opposed to the proposal to make a Euro Super League. The so-called big six who appear to be signed up to this proposal are acting purely for their own greed and not in the interests of their supporters or indeed of football as a whole in this country.'

'This proposal must not be allowed to go ahead and the quick it is dumped into the dustbin of history the better. This proposal

is opposed by the Football Supporters Association and the Government and almost every organisation representing football in this country.'

We welcome the subsequent announcements by each of the clubs that they have reconsidered. Burnley FC Chairman Alan Pace called for the government to appoint an independent regulator to protect English football with legislation. We will work with the FSA, the Club and others to ensure nothing like this can happen again'.





Chairman's statement

Big changes in the strangest of times

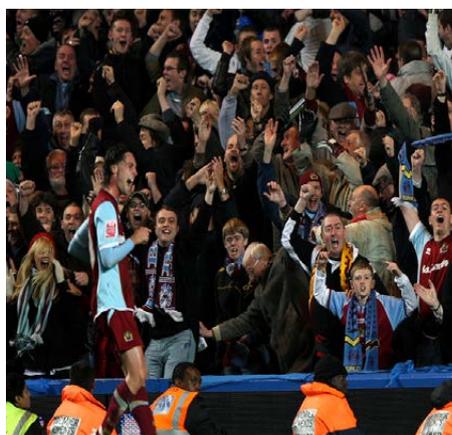
What a year! On 7 March 2020, Burnley drew 1–1 with Spurs. Little did we know then that the next twelve months were going to be quite historic for the Clarets in many ways. David Baldwin had just left Turf Moor to take over as Chief Executive for the English Football League. His successor Neil Hart had been in a similar post at the very successful Burnley Community Project, BFCiTC, for several years. Now Neil has just left Turf Moor to move in a new direction.

Within days of that draw, the football season ground to a halt as the government took steps to try to control the spread of Covid-19. Unfortunately, the death toll started to go up. Lockdown and all the other restrictions were to be tried, and chopped and changed as the year progressed. Without all these actions the outcome would have been so much worse but we are still all wondering when we will return to normal, whatever that might be. Vaccinations are now taking place rapidly but Covid-19 has not gone and will not go completely.

In May the season restarted; the Clarets had a good run and ended up in 10th place. All games had to be played behind closed doors: a few were held with strictly reduced crowds but a second wave of the virus soon brought this to a halt.

The new season started and 11,000 Burnley fans bought season tickets, but still no crowds were allowed. Neil Hart must have spent so much of his time dealing with Covid-19 issues which cost the club tens of millions according to Neil – lost money at the gates, reduced sales of kit, reduced sponsorship, etc.

We might get a game or two at the end of the season at which some fans are allowed, but how many and what will the



We want fans back, but we also want to be in control of this virus

restrictions be? Even for next season there are still so many issues to be resolved. So that memory of the Spurs game slips further away. We obviously want fans back in the grounds but we also want to be in control of this appalling virus.

The Clarets did not replace the three players that had left the Club in the summer window and there was no action in the January window. Some fans wanted a change in ownership and late in the year rumours started that two different overseas buyers were interested in buying the Club. Burnley had done a great job in getting into the Premier League and the Board had been running the Club well using the money generated by promotion to invest in it. Work had been done to improve Turf Moor and substantial investment made in the training ground. Debt had been eliminated and the ground had been bought back. The rumours persisted and ALK became the favourites.

On 30 December it was announced the Directors had sold their bulk of the shares to a new team led by Alan Pace. The new owners hold about 85% of the Club with 1700 shareholders holding the remaining minority stake. The new Board have borrowed against the security of the Clubs' assets. Two of the old directors have remained on the Board. Strangely, the former Directors – particularly Mike Garlick – now have the money to invest in the Club which they did not have before!

The Trust have met Alan Pace several times. He is keen to work with fans and people locally. He stresses the long-term commitment to the Club. He intends to improve the facilities at Turf Moor and give the fans an improved match-day experience. The Board are keen on bringing the women's team into the Club and recognise this will need improved training facilities: not easy, maybe, at the Gawthorpe site on National Trust land.

This is all a massive change for Burnley who have a long history of local ownership, and of close links to the town. It is obviously the biggest ever change in the history of the Club. What would Bob Lord think? While they did not splash money in the January window, very few other clubs did either. The new owners, with Alan Pace acting in an Executive role until a new Chief Executive is appointed, are saying all the right things. Hopefully the Trust will be able to work well with the new Board. We all want the Club to be a success and we wish the new owners well. Let us remember the good things of the past and also the present as we all work to secure a great future for the Clarets.

Come on Burnley – up the Clarets!

Peter Pike
Chair, Clarets Trust

Trust Officers

Chairman

Peter Pike

Vice Chair

Terry Hephrun

Treasurer

Nigel Cotterill

Secretary

Liam Hallinan

Membership Officer

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Moorhouse's Brewery

Socios: our Treasurer cautions

Hear the word cryptocurrency and you instantly think of Bitcoin, but there are other cryptocurrencies on the market and one that has been built around sports fans is causing a lot of concern across Europe.

Socios.com is advertised as a fan engagement mobile app which has been built on the Chiliz Blockchain.

Some fans will remember last year when Socios pulled out of a partnership with West Ham United after a fan backlash, Socios has finally released a statement and that they 'wanted to deal with bigger clubs'.

To avoid all the cryptocurrency terminology that will confuse a lot of fans, Socios has relabelled each cryptocurrency block as a 'Fan Token'. The Fan Tokens are then given a \$ sign followed by a reference to your club. Manchester City has become the latest club to sign an agreement (\$CITY Fan Tokens) and according to Socios Chief Executive Alexandre Dreyfus several more Premier League clubs are in talks.

There are no national guidelines and very little protection

The Fan Tokens are purchased by and used by fans that can enter competitions, be part of a VIP meet and have a chance to vote in polls, but some past polls are meaningless such as What player would you like to run the Club's Twitter Account for a day or What song is to be played on the PA system when your team scores. Any Club can do these polls, competitions and arrange a player meet for free on their website without the need to monetise fan engagement.

The Socios app offers a daily token hunt where you will be able to hunt for tokens, but serious concerns have been voiced around this. The tokens are automatically generated and



Fan tokens: Nigel has serious concerns

randomly placed on a map near your location, you must go to that location and with your phone's camera turned on to capture that token on your mobile phone screen, the randomly placing of tokens is a serious concern that instantly needs addressing.

I personally have screenshots where to gain a free fan token the app has asked me to trespass on private land, onto a builders merchants yard where heavy plant machinery and trucks are in operation, a main goods train track and even – on a weekday – a primary school!

With the clubs' advertising and PR machines going into operation, it is easy for fans to oversee the pitfalls that this creates. Furthermore, these fan tokens are still a cryptocurrency and as ruled by the European Union are an asset.

Unlike with your bank, there are no national guidelines and very little protection in your Cryptocurrency (Fan Token) investment. Educating the fans so that they fully understand this terminology and the Fan Token concept is paramount and so far, apart from a few supporters that actively engage on social media, official information from Football's reliable & credible sources has been severely lacking.

Nigel Cotterill

Online harms bill published

Online abuse has been around for a long time, but recent events have brought this into the public domain: Arsenal's Willian Borges da Silva and Eddie Nketiah, Manchester United's Marcus Rashford MBE, Anthony Martial and Lauren James, and Chelsea's Reece James have all been subjected to online racial abuse. Referee Mike Dean received death threats and Burnley's Erik Pieters received online hatred aimed at his pregnant wife.

Referee Mike Dean received death threats

The Football Supporters Association (FSA), of which the Trust are members, have recently created a working group to coordinate and engage with social media companies and the government. Our treasurer, Nigel Cotterill, reports.

The government has published the *Online Harms White Paper* which proposes that social media and tech companies will be overseen by an independent regulator; ambitious plans of accountability for tech companies and a new regulatory framework for online safety setting out the responsibilities of social media and tech companies. Currently social media companies are too slow to react to reports of online abuse, and indeed sometimes never act at all.

One of the biggest concerns is that social media companies allow their users to remain anonymous. Twitter have defended this, saying 'Everyone has a right to share their voice without requiring a government ID'; then contradict themselves by saying 'We will continue to challenge this abhorrent behaviour at source'. But how can Twitter challenge people when they allow anonymous accounts?

The FSA Working Group are producing an action plan to present to FSA Members. The plan will be filtered down to supporters who can unite and confine online abuse to history.

Magical moments and results that must not be named

No Nay Never podcaster and Trust member George Poole strikes a philosophical tone as he looks back on the season so far

Looking back on the season so far we should take inspiration from JK Rowling, and look through the perspective of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, in which Rowling presents her readers with the Mirror of Erised (bear with me on this). The Mirror of Erised is unique in that it reflects the deepest and most desperate desires of the heart, for example, Harry sees his deceased parents. For us to look back on this season truthfully, we must ask ourselves, what are our deepest, most desperate desires for a successful Burnley season?

The season began in a rather mixed fashion, with contrasting fortunes for the Clarets in the league and cup. While early progress was attained in the EFL Cup with victories over Sheffield United and Millwall, including a stunning Josh Brownhill strike at The Den, the league season began with two defeats at the hands of Leicester City and Southampton. After we received our annual battering from Manchester City in the cup, bringing our run to a sombre conclusion, another measly performance was greeted with defeat in the league. A 3–1 loss away at Newcastle United ensured the Clarets had lost their opening three games in the top flight for the first time since 1927–28. We had to wait until the end of November for a first league victory, with Chris Wood's winner quickly followed by another hammering at the hands of Manchester City. Another season came and another 5–0 away defeat was inflicted: let no one tell you that 2020 was a completely unprecedented year.

Perhaps the first real spell of cheer for us as fans came just a couple of weeks before Christmas, as a more resilient Burnley side – thanks in large part to the return of Ben Mee – managed to come away from Arsenal with a tremendous 1–0 victory. Since the 0–0 draw away at

Brighton, Sean Dyche's men had taken three clean sheets from five games. With Mee's return came the rejuvenation of performances, alongside results, as December continued with 7 points from 4 games. Acutely impressive was our 2–1 win at home to Wolves, which delivered Ashley Barnes' first goal in more than a



Sean Dyche has worked wonders in getting us to our position

year and came amid rumours about the American takeover being concluded.

With the end of a torrid year for humanity came both New Year celebrations and an announcement that Clarets fans had eagerly awaited, on the 31 December it was announced that the club takeover by ALK Capital had been completed. With the club sitting 16th in the league and promises of January investment coming quickly from Alan Pace, things were certainly looking rosy. However, January investment was not delivered, and the club's stagnation continued. Although odd moments of

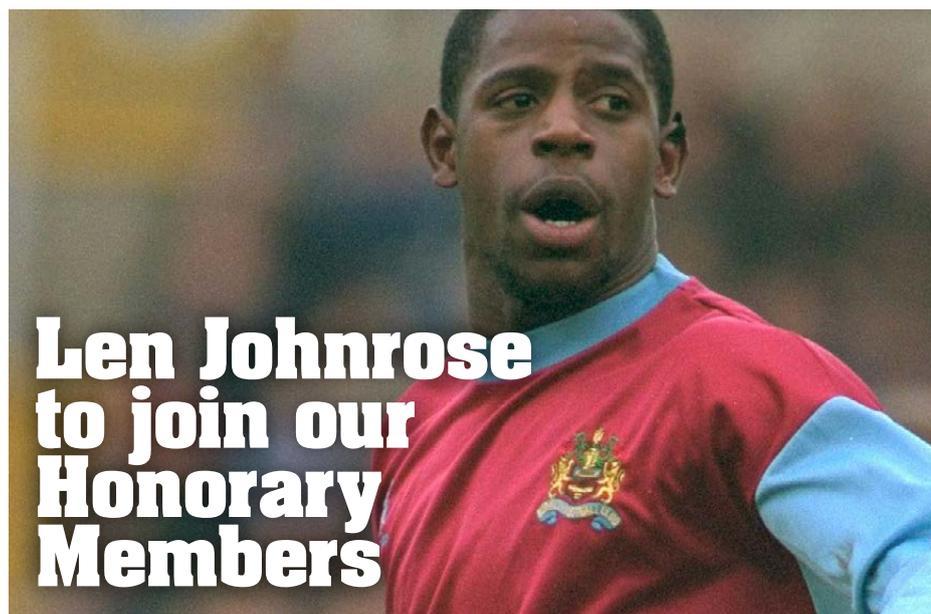
magic have been produced by this hard-working squad, the Clarets are clearly short in quality and have been left behind by teams such as Aston Villa, West Ham United and Wolves in the past few years.

The bright sparks certainly shone in recent months, allowing Alan Pace and his partners a sense of optimism for what may be possible if they deliver upon their promises. Perhaps the brightest moment of the season came on a cold night at Anfield, as we derailed Liverpool's title challenge and put an end to their 68-game unbeaten home run. It was a historic night for the Clarets and will be remembered for many years to come, with cult hero Ashley Barnes firing home a penalty in the final 10 minutes.

After our first victory at Anfield since 1974, the week that followed was undoubtedly the best of our season thus far. In a fashion most unlike ourselves, we dispatched three goals in each game to first defeat Fulham in the FA Cup, before providing a remarkable series of comebacks to punish Aston Villa with a 3–2 win. It finally looked as though a long overdue cup run would be delivered, but the fifth round brought a disappointing defeat at home to Bournemouth.

An emphatic 3–0 win away at Crystal Palace papered over the cracks of what was a poor February, with performances mixed and points hard to come by. Still, this squad can grind out a result when needed and following a series of draws and a tremendous performance to win 2–1 away at Everton, it appears as though another season of Premier League football is within sight. At the time of writing, we sit on 33 points and 15th, with relegation a distinct worry as Fulham languish 7 points behind us.

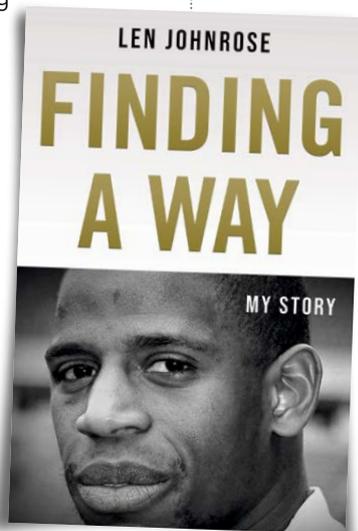
Think about the Mirror of Erised again: is 15th–17th place what you wish for from Burnley? To be honest, I feel disheartened and frustrated by a lack of progress. When I look into the Mirror, I see a team capable of challenging for the top 10, with the odd tremendous season and maybe a cup run. Sean Dyche has worked wonders in getting us to the position we are in; let's hope the new board allows him to build on his success and provide inspiring seasons to come. *Budding writer? Let us know if you fancy contributing to a future newsletter!*



The Trust is delighted to announce that we will be adding another person with strong links to Burnley FC as an honorary member. Recently, we asked Len Johnrose if he would consider being

our latest addition to the ranks of Clarets Trust. We are pleased to say that he accepted. More on this will follow in due course, once we finalise the arrangements for the handing over 'ceremony'.

Len joins a distinguished list: Barry Kilby, Jimmy Robson, Martin Dobson, Paul Fletcher, Stan Ternent and Willie Irvine. In addition to these



Len joins a distinguished list of Burnley legends

Burnley FC legends are some other people who are sadly no longer with us: Brian Miller (and then his wife Mary Miller) and Jimmy McIlroy.

We are sure you will join us in welcoming Len to the Trust, and wish him every best wish possible for his struggle ahead. If you have not yet read his book, *Finding a Way*, we can certainly recommend it!

Tributes as Neil Hart departs



Clarets Trust would like to wish former Chief Executive Officer, Neil Hart, all the best for the future. Neil, who took on the role in March 2020, departs the club to pursue new opportunities. The Trust has had plenty of dealings with Neil in his roles at the club, including his excellent work with BFCiTC.

Alan Pace said: 'With the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the last year has involved several challenges in overseeing a Premier League football club, and I'd like to recognise Neil for the work he's done at Burnley and in the local community. While overseeing the club in the interim period, the board and I will begin the search for a new CEO immediately and will update supporters in due course.'

Once again, we would like to wish Neil all the best, and thank him for working with the Trust in the past.

Trust member Q&A a hit with the fans

Clarets Trust members were invited to join the February Clarets Trust Board meeting for a question-and-answer session with the Board members. Around ten members joined the meeting on Zoom. Several colleagues submitted questions in advance, which were answered by Trust Chair Peter Pike. These, and other questions raised during the call touched on key themes such as: Takeover and position of small shareholders;

Club strategy around recruitment and development of academy players; and Club communications. In addition to this, Peter updated the group that the Trust board had already met with the new Chairman, Alan Pace and that there is a commitment to continued dialogue.

The opportunity to join the board and ask questions was very well received, especially for those members who joined from locations far from East Lancashire!

The board feel this is an excellent channel to communicate with members and will be looking to host another Q&A in the coming months, possibly on occasion with Club representation.

Please keep an eye out for website updates and emails. If you have specific questions ahead of any scheduled Q&A please email secretary@claretstrust.co.uk <http://claretstrust.easysearch.org.uk>

VAR: Report on FSA evening with Mike Riley



The Football Supporters Association (FSA) hosted a meeting with Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL) General Manager Mike Riley, and deputy Adam Gale-Watts to discuss the use of VAR in the game in February; PGMOL being the body responsible for match officials in English professional football. Clarets Trust Board representatives Liam Hallinan and Martin Barnes attended.

The online meeting was part of the new commitment to dialogue between supporters and the football authorities following the FSA's AGM last year, where fans' concerns about VAR's impact on the game were flagged at conference.

Riley provided the network with a detailed breakdown of the Premier

League's VAR process, its remit, the impact it is having on Premier League football as well as the wider discussions ongoing with FIFA and International Football Association Board (IFAB).

He also explained that VAR is the most significant change to football in a lifetime. It will take some time to fully harness the benefits and fine-tune the operation; it took 5–7 years to reach existing levels in cricket and rugby.

Reflecting on VAR performance, Riley noted that VAR corrected more than 100 'Key Match Incidents', an average of three per round of fixtures, increasing accuracy from 82% in 2018–19 to 95% in 2019–20, concluding there is 'undoubted benefit'.

Network members expressed concerns around unintended consequences of VAR such as spontaneity/goal celebration, delayed VAR reviews and so on, all having a negative impact. Riley told the group that PGMOL are continually working to reduce impact of VAR and have already reduced the time for VAR intervention (average VAR check now takes 32 seconds, and touchline reviews around 82 seconds). 'The spontaneous joy question is an interesting one,' Riley told fan reps. 'We have seen examples where one set of fans celebrate a goal while the other fans are dejected and then, when the decision is reversed, the opposite occurs.'

Communication in stadia was raised as a concern. PGMOL are continually working with broadcasters on the amount and quality of information supplied. There is more that can be done with the use of big screen messaging.

Laws of the game are set by IFAB, and VAR protocol is administered by FIFA, which somewhat limits what English football can do with VAR. But PGMOL are continuously in discussions with FIFA and other countries to review operation and how it can be implemented.

Supporter feedback is vital. The Clarets Trust sit on the FSA Network Meetings. Please contact us via secretary@clarestrust.co.uk to raise any matters. You can also join the next Member Q&A with the board, to be announced soon.

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Dates for your diary

Date of AGM: 2 June

Closing date for nomination for elections: 28 April

Closing date for Player of Year Votes: 1 May

Voting will be possible online via the ClaretsTrust.co.uk member area only.

Aims and Objectives of the Clarets Trust

The aim of the Clarets Trust is to ensure the present and future success of Burnley FC as both a football club and a community club.

We intend to do this by pursuing the following objectives:

- The purchase of shares in the club to promote supporter involvement
- The provision of a democratic voice for the fans through supporter involvement
- The promotion of Burnley FC within the community
- By identifying/evaluating schemes likely to benefit the Club and/or its supporters